

3

PUBLIC HEARING: Bill 25-08
Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee
East County Citizens Advisory Board
July 8, 2008

Good evening. My name is Kim Bobola. I serve as the chair of the East County Citizens Advisory Board, and want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf on our advisory board.

The East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) supports Bill 25-08, which proposes to use the Emergency Medical Services (E-M-S) Transport Fee as a revenue source, with funds collected being dedicated to Fire & Rescue and EMS purposes only.

Bill 25-08 is a clear and straightforward way to get funding back to the community. It requires no County resident to pay anything, and results in no change in service. This fee, which is charged-back to insurers, is in use in more that 60% of jurisdictions nationally - and throughout the DC metropolitan area - except in Montgomery County. The EMS Transport Fee will provide Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Services with the funds needed today to maintain high levels of service to all parts of the County, and support our local volunteer departments.

We are bothered that a misinformation campaign has misled the average person.

- ECCAB believes the concern about funding splits with volunteer departments should not be confused with the discussion, since this concern can be resolved separately.
- ECCAB finds there is no evidence from jurisdictions that have successfully implemented this fee that it deters anyone from calling for needed emergency medical transport assistance.
- As ECCAB also discussed, insurance companies have EMS Transport coverage. As with all expenses, they will add these costs to the total as they develop rates for purchasers and users of insurance. The total dollars in this category are a tiny percentage of their overall coverage. Thus, ECCAB concluded: One would be challenged to spot the rate increase attributable to this expense.

In reality, the EMS Transport Fee will have little impact on citizens, since the "charge-back" to insurers is not anything a County resident will ever see. Conversely, it will have a huge impact in supplying Fire & Rescue Services with the dedicated resources it needs for the services it provides, without having to raise taxes for this purpose.

We urge you not only to support this bill, but also to strengthen it with amended language that ensures the funding remains within Fire & Rescue Services.